The Real News Network

POSTED IN THE CHRIS HEDGES REPORT

DID ISRAEL'S MILITARY KILL ITS OWN CIVILIANS ON OCT. 7?

Testimony from survivors of Al Aqsa Flood, combined with the documented past actions of Israel's armed forces against captured soldiers and civilians, raise questions about what really caused the high Israeli death toll.

BY CHRIS HEDGES

NOVEMBER 17, 2023

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Kibbutz Nir Oz resident Hadas Kalderon, whose children have been taken hostage, and her mother and niece killed, breaks down in tears while looking through the burnt out home of her late mother Rina Sutzkever on October 30, 2023 in Kibbutz Nir Oz, Israel. Photo by Dan Kitwood/Getty ImagesKibbutz Nir Oz resident Hadas Kalderon, whose children have been taken hostage, and her mother and niece killed, breaks down in tears while looking through the burnt out home of her late mother Rina Sutzkever on October 30, 2023 in Kibbutz Nir Oz, Israel. Photo by Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

YouTube video

For all the sensationalism surrounding the events of Oct. 7, when Hamas broke through the Gaza fence and seized territory in the Gaza Envelope as part of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, there is still much that we do not know. The official Israeli death toll from the attack is estimated at 1,200 civilians, revised from an initial estimate of 1,400. Among this figure are several hundred civilians, which Israel says were killed by Hamas militants. Other testimony from survivors of Oct. 7 suggests an alternative explanation—that in its fervor to defeat Hamas, Israeli commanders may have willingly targeted and sacrificed Israeli soldiers and civilians in the crossfire. Max Blumenthal of The Grayzone joins The Chris Hedges Report for an in-depth look.

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TRANSCRIPT

Chris Hedges: There's growing evidence that in the chaotic fighting that took place once Hamas militants entered Israel on October 7, the Israeli military decided to target not only Hamas fighters but the Israeli captives with them. Tuval Escapa, a member of the security team for Kibbutz Be'eri, told the Israeli press, that he set up a hotline to coordinate between kibbutz residents and the Israeli army. Escapa told the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz, that his desperation began to set in. "The commanders in the field made difficult decisions, including shelling houses on their occupants in order to eliminate the terrorists along with the hostages." The newspaper reported that Israeli commanders were, "Compelled to request an aerial strike against its own facility inside the Erez Crossing to Gaza in order to repulse the terrorists who had seized control."

That base housed Israeli Civil Administration officers and soldiers. Israel, in 1986, instituted a military policy called the Hannibal Directive, apparently named for the Carthaginian general who poisoned himself rather than be captured by the Romans following the capture of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah. The directive is designed to prevent Israeli troops from falling into enemy hands through the maximum use of force, even at the cost of killing the captured soldiers and civilians. The directive was executed during the 2014 Israeli assault on Gaza, known as Operation Protective Edge. Hamas fighters on August 1, 2014, captured an Israeli soldier, Lieutenant Hadar Golden. In response, Israel dropped more than 2,000 bombs, missiles, and shells on the area where he was being held. Golden was killed along with over 100 Palestinian civilians. The directive was supposedly rescinded in 2016.

Joining me to discuss the reports of Israel shelling its own citizens with tanks and missiles is Max Blumenthal, who investigated this for The Grayzone. So you did a wonderful job piecing together these reports that are coming out of Israel. Why don't you lay out what Israeli commanders faced after roughly 10 hours, several hours after this incursion, and then perhaps give me some details about what you found out?

Max Blumenthal: Well, thanks, Chris. I'm still trying to piece together what happened on October 7. One reason that I'm left investigating even after this report that I thought was comprehensive was that in the face of so much death and destruction caused by Israel's military in Gaza – Which is basically tantamount to genocide. You have systematic killing in Gaza – Everyone I know there has … Luckily I don't know anyone who's been killed, but everyone I know there has lost neighbors or relatives. They've all lost their homes. So the Israeli military and the

Prime Minister's office, Netanyahu's office, are recycling October 7 atrocities and they're also introducing new deceptions in order to try to keep the media's lens focused on October 7 now that it is starting to hone in on the horror of Gaza. We have all these new stories about babies baked in ovens, we've heard stories about babies cut out of mothers' wombs by so-called Hamas terrorists, rape, gang rape, women after being taken, gang raped in the streets in Gaza City.

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All of these lies were spun out. The 40 beheaded babies was repeated by Biden, who claimed he'd seen photographs. All of these lies were repeated and put forward in order to give Israel the latitude to carry out this genocidal assault that we're now witnessing. And we can see Biden was so stunned by the propaganda that was being pushed on him by Netanyahu's office and the pro-Israel media that he immediately caved. Tony Blinken in his recent Senate testimony also repeated some of these lies. So I'm still trying to unpack it because it's these lies that went beyond the actual killings and atrocities that were committed by gunmen from the Gaza Strip on October 7 that have made it possible for Israel to target and exterminate hundreds of entire families in the Gaza Strip as well as hospitals and medical centers. So I started my investigation when testimony started to filter out in Israeli media which contravened the official story of October 7.

The official story, which has been told to Americans and Israelis, is that Hamas "terrorists" stormed into Southern Israel and began shooting and killing people at random. Then burned them alive, tied up entire families in their homes, and then burned them all, somehow, melted cars and burned people in their cars as they were trying to flee, and carried out this gigantic mass shooting. It does appear clear that many Israeli non-combatants were shot by Hamas gunmen but that's where the official story stops. What I was able to determine from these testimonies, as well as basic and visual analysis of the photos that the Israeli Foreign Minister and Foreign Ministry and Prime Minister's office were putting forward, was that Israel used disproportionate force on its own citizens in order to dislodge a politically driven military offensive by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which was aimed at extracting political concessions from the state of Israel, which had been besieging the Gaza Strip for 15 years. So you read one of those testimonies, and I guess we can go into some detail about them and how I came to my conclusions.

Chris Hedges: Yeah, let's go in because, in your article, which people can read on

The Grayzone, you print pictures. I'll let you go from there. The photographic evidence seems to contradict the statements that have come out of Jerusalem.

Max Blumenthal: It's important to understand that the main goal in this Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad military offensive was to gather as many captives as possible, particularly Israeli soldiers, in order to trigger the prisoner exchange that was witnessed when Gilad Shalit in 2011 was released; The Israeli soldier who was taken in 2006, who was operating a tank outside Gaza, was taken in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian prisoners, including the current prime minister of Gaza, Yahya Sinwar. So this entire Al Aqsa Flood operation is understood against the backdrop of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange. So gunmen were sent with detailed maps to population centers and to military bases. In the military bases, they were obviously given instructions to attack and kill Israeli soldiers who were maintaining the siege of Gaza. Much of the Gaza division, which has also been responsible for so many massacres inside Gaza over the years, was wiped out. The Erez Crossing… I don't know if you've been through there, Chris.

Chris Hedges: Yeah, many times. Many times, yes.

Max Blumenthal: Okay. Yeah, because you've been to Gaza, I've been through there three times. It is the nexus, the nerve center of the siege of Gaza. It's not only where you cross through if you want to enter Gaza and return to, or if you're a resident of Gaza you'll have to pass through there to get medical treatment outside. It's the home of the civil administration, the bureaucracy of the panopticon-style occupation of Gaza. So that was immediately overrun by gunmen as a military target, and with all these soldiers inside, the head of the Gaza division actually went into an underground bunker. He recounted this story to Haaretz and made the tough decision to bomb Erez Crossing and they sent Hellfire missiles onto the Erez Crossing from Apache helicopters. And this was basically the beginning of the Iron Swords Operation that Netanyahu declared several days later, which is essentially the carpet bombing of Gaza.

But Apache helicopters were scrambled in the morning. The assault began around 6:00AM at daybreak, and by 10:30AM, according to Israeli media accounts, all of the special force's commando teams, and the well-trained Hamas teams had already left. By that point, there were two squadrons of Apache helicopters that had been scrambled, and they were not even at full strength until 12:00PM. So you have action at Erez Crossing, and then you have Kibbutz Be'eri, which is the site that

registered the most casualties of non-combatants. I counted something like 150 among the confirmed death toll printed at Haaretz and most of them, they were not soldiers. These were people who were caught in the crossfire, Hamas gunmen had tried to take them captive, and there were standoffs in their homes. And by the time Israeli special forces arrived, many of those standoffs had either ended or they ended them simply by shelling people's homes with tanks.

According to Yasmin Porat, who had fled the electronic music festival – Which had come under attack, which was held right between Kibbutz Be'eri and Kibbutz Rahim, which also have military bases essentially embedded within them – It was held on the road between these two kibbutzim and came under attack. Many captives were taken. This woman, Yasmin Porat, fled to Kibbutz Be'eri, went into a home with her partner, and then they were taken captive momentarily by gunmen. She recounted to Israeli National Radio that when the Israeli special forces arrived, they started shooting everyone and that most of the captives, along with the Hamas gunmen, were caught in the crossfire, and that everyone was killed except for her and her captor, who used her as a human shield in order to guarantee his own safety when he surrendered.

She saw her own partner, whose hands had been bound by her captors, get shot by Israeli special forces, and then they lobbed two tank shells into the home that she had been in. So if you look at the pictures of Kibbutz Be'eri, they look like the homes in Gaza that I've seen, or you may have seen that came under shelling from Israeli tanks and Israeli artillery. There's no way that Hamas gunmen could have done that much structural damage to this entire kibbutz with the small arms that they were equipped with; Kalashnikovs and some RPGs.

I24, an Israeli Foreign Ministry-sponsored propaganda network, actually went to this kibbutz on a guided tour and said they saw tank tracks everywhere. It's obvious what happened there and it was stated clearly by the security coordinator of Kibbutz Be'eri, who you quoted at the top of this interview. He was on a hotline with the Israeli Military Command and they decided to shell houses on top of their occupants, including Israeli civilians. Now, why were they doing this? As you mentioned, there's the Hannibal Directive, this once-secret directive that was introduced after Israel entered into a major prisoner swap with I believe the PFLPGC, which operates out of Syria in exchange for Ahmed Jabril and hundreds of other prisoners in order to get back some Israeli soldiers who had been taken in the Lebanese Civil War.

Chris Hedges: It was only three. I don't think it was a very –

Max Blumenthal: Yeah, it was three.

Chris Hedges: – Yeah.

Max Blumenthal: So this is a politically painful prisoner swap, and the Israeli public was furious, and the right-wing politicians were furious. So they introduced this directive named after the Carthaginian general Hannibal – Who took his own life, he took poison rather than being taken captive by the enemy – And it authorizes Israeli commanders to kill their own soldiers if they're taken captive by the enemy in order to prevent such a prisoner swap from taking place. And it was used again, this is when it got exposed in 2014 – August 1, 2014, what's known as Black Friday in Southern Gaza – And I was actually there in the aftermath of this massacre. A lieutenant named Hadar Golden was taken by Hamas fighters. He was in the field when Israel broke a ceasefire and started attacking around the southern city of Rafa. The Israeli Military Command authorized airstrikes, artillery strikes, and tank fire to bring the full wrath of the Israeli military onto this area in order to make sure that this soldier did not get taken alive.

Over 100 people in Rafa were killed in this massacre. The morgues were filling up. It was hideous. I actually visited a hospital called Kuwaiti Hospital, which is now under attack again, and because the mortuaries were so full of bodies on this day, they actually had to bring in ice cream coolers to store the bodies of babies. The doctor who interviewed me, who I interviewed about that, his entire family was killed about a week and a half ago, after he refused Israeli orders to evacuate Kuwaiti Hospital. But back to the Hannibal directive. We have to question whether it was put into play on October 7. Because we not only have the Erez Crossing where many soldiers were killed – And if you look at the aftermath, the roof was clearly brought down. There's serious structural damage to the roof of Erez Crossing – You have Kibbutz Be'eri where there was tank shelling, and then you have these Apache helicopter pilots in the air who were stating in their testimonies in Hebrew to Israeli media that they had no intelligence, no way of distinguishing civilian from combatant on the ground.

And yet they were told to empty their tanks, completely unload their ammo, then head back to the base, get filled up again, reload, and then go shoot as many cars

and people as they could on the ground. Pure chaos. These testimonies have been totally ignored, by the way, by Western media. Were they encouraged to kill captives or shoot cars that they thought contained captives? We don't know. What we do know is there were orders from the top to kill Israeli civilians if Hamas gunmen were around them in order to get the gunmen. And it's like the same military doctrine that's being employed in Gaza: Any civilian is a target if they are the "terrorist's next-door neighbor." Israel actually calls it the Neighbor Policy. They don't know any other doctrine. They don't have any other means of targeting and they weren't prepared, obviously, for this military onslaught. So they went to their core doctrine of bombing everything in sight.

That brings us to the third scenario. We talked about Erez Crossing and Kibbutz Be'eri, then you have the chaos of the Nova Electronic Music Festival. And it's there that it appears clear that after a lot of these Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad commando teams had left – This is an element that's left out in a lot of Western media – Many people from Gaza started streaming in, including lower level characters from the armed factions who may have had weapons but weren't part of the operation or weren't trained, onlookers, people who wanted to see what Israel looked like, to see the land that their families had been kicked off. There were some heinous killings, and you could see actual captives being taken by guys on motorcycles who didn't even have weapons. They were grabbing people.

A lot of this happened around the Nova Music Festival. There was a lot of shooting between festival security guards and various gunmen, and a lot of people were killed, but many people were fleeing the festival by car. There is a video of some Hamas gunmen stopping cars and shooting people. But then you have all of these images that the Israeli Foreign Ministry put out of cars that are completely melted, and their corpses inside are charred. And those to me are telltale signs of Hellfire missile strikes from Apache helicopters, and the Apache crews, the squadrons. They put out a video afterward of themselves shooting cars, hitting cars with Hellfire missiles, and shooting people who were pedestrians walking on the ground with cannon fire.

We don't know who those people were, but if you look, a lot of the cars were heading back to Gaza. So they were very likely cars of people from Gaza who may have been taking captives and so many captives or would-be captives were killed. Was one of them Shawnee Luke? This woman whom the Israeli Foreign Ministry has been making such a big deal of who was a festival partygoer, who was attractive, and was a German citizen. There's some video of her being taken. They say they found a skull fragment from her.

Was she in a car that was hit by a Hellfire missile? Unclear. But it's very clear that many of these cars were hit by Apache helicopters and the helicopter pilots said they had no idea who was in them. They were shooting people on the other side of Gaza after they entered, by the afternoon of October 7. It's very clear to me that many people were killed. Many Israelis were killed by Israeli forces, along with many active duty, uniformed Israeli soldiers who were actively engaged in the siege of Gaza were combatants.

Chris Hedges: I want to buttress that I went into Kuwait after the first Gulf War and drove up the Highway of Death, which was miles and miles of Iraqi military vehicles, all of which had been hit by Apache helicopters. And when I saw one of the pictures, one of the images of a car with two completely blackened corpses, that is what I saw in vehicle after vehicle after vehicle going into Kuwait. Some of these images which were disseminated by the IDF have been removed. And maybe you can explain why you think they were no longer made available to the public.

Max Blumenthal: Well, when I first went to Gaza in 2014, in the midst of Israel's 51-day-long assault on Gaza, I came across a car that was on the roadside that had been roasted by a Hellfire missile along with its driver. The driver's body had been removed but it was undoubtedly charred and you could actually see his sandal melted into the gas pedal. He had been hit by a Hellfire missile. I embedded the picture in my article to compare it to the vehicles that the Israeli Foreign Ministry was pointing to as evidence of Hamas savagery, and it's identical. By the way, he was a taxi driver, a poor young guy named Fadi Alowa, who had taken a wounded Hamas fighter to the hospital without even knowing that he had been a fighter. And so they killed him.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry has a website called hamas-massacre.com. And the UN Ambassador – This unhinged character named Gilad Iradan, who used to be in charge of Israel's meddling operations to attack college students who were organizing to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel, or forming Palestine solidarity student groups – Gilad Iradan whipped out this QR code at his UN address, about two weeks ago, and the QR code was supposed to lead to a Google Drive folder that contained all these images of charred cars, melted bodies, and all sorts of other atrocities that Hamas had committed. But all the pictures eventually disappeared. My initial read was that they concluded that a lot of these pictures were either fake, or they could have even depicted Hamas fighters who had come in and been hit by Hellfire missiles. But then Gilad Iradan in embarrassment later said that there was a

technical error, and he tried to repost the images.

And that makes sense because they have no shame. They lie relentlessly, shamelessly and so it didn't seem like they actually deleted them out of shame. They deleted them because of a major technical error, which is also ironic because Israel's supposed to be the technically savvy startup nation that's teaching the world through innovation and creativity how we can enter the AI future, but they can't even maintain a simple Google Drive.

And that shows the boneheadedness of this entire operation. But it's worked. It's been very successful in convincing Brussels and Washington that Hamas was ISIS. That is Israel's message: Hamas is ISIS, they're irrational, they aim to simply kill Jews, they don't have any political demands, and the only response to them is the response that the US waged on ISIS – After supporting ISIS, by the way, in Syria – Which was to destroy much of Raha, ISIS's base of operation, as well as Mosul in Iraq. The man who actually oversaw those operations, James Glynn, the marine officer, was sent to Israel to consult the Israeli military in the immediate aftermath of October 7 on how they should respond. Now, the Pentagon's pulling back and saying, whoa, this is a little bit crazy for us even. We don't even know what you're targeting, or where your targeting is coming from. But they gave him the green light because they fell for the propaganda shock and awe campaign of these photos.

And recently actually at a fundraiser for the Republican Jewish Coalition – Which is funded substantially by the Adelson family of the late laconic oligarch, Sheldon Adelson, but also many other wealthy Republican, pro-Israel Jews in Las Vegas at Adelson's Hotel – A character named Ellie Beir appears on stage, who is a volunteer rescuer and a religious nationalist orthodox Jew from New York, who is living in Israel and had arrived as a first responder in October 7 through a group called United Hatzalah. And this is obviously like a fundraising speech. And he declares that a baby had been burned in an oven, had been baked in an oven by Hamas "terrorists."

I'm looking at his comments right now. I have them in front of me. He actually had not seen any baby in an oven. It was someone named Ellie Moskowitz, who is from his first responder United Hatzalah team. And Ellie Moskowitz had not seen any baby baked in an oven. He said that he found a small bag with contents of body parts that had been apparently pressed against a heating element. These body parts were displayed by Netanyahu filtered out on Twitter and sent to influencers by

the Israeli Foreign Ministry in the PM's office after Netanyahu was embarrassed by the retraction of the story about 40 beheaded babies. So if we go back to October 8, CNN and Biden begin telling this phony story about 40 beheaded babies, they are both forced to retract, Netanyahu puts out an image of some burned body parts, says it's a baby, and then flash forward to this fundraiser in Las Vegas where these first responders are saying that there was a baby baked in an oven based on body parts they had in a bag which were pressed against a heating element.

Now, put two and two together. What heating element could have created that much heat to char a body part, which didn't even belong to a baby, but was put forward by Netanyahu to save face? It was likely a Hellfire missile and body parts that had been blown to bits by a Hellfire missile, which were likely an Israeli citizen but could have been someone from Gaza, are being put forward as an Israeli baby. But if you look at the confirmed death count, only one Israeli baby was killed. It's horrible and tragic. It was a 10-month-old baby named Millie Cohen, who was accidentally shot by Hamas gunmen in an exchange of fire.

And more reporting will come out about this, but you can look at the confirmed death toll at Haaretz. There's no other baby. There's no baby burned in an oven, no one's even saying that. So what we're looking at is the most horrific, lurid propaganda, which is bogus, all derive from apparent friendly fire and is being spun in order to justify the actual beheading of babies with missiles in the Gaza Strip and the systematic extermination of an entire society. A senior Israeli security source told Yedioth Ahronoth, the top Israeli tabloid, that 20,000 people had been killed in Gaza. I personally think that could be an overcount, and they're trying to boast to the Israeli public about how many people they've killed to satisfy the bloodlust of the public after October 7.

But if that's true, that's like 1% of the entire population, which definitely qualifies as genocide. So this propaganda has been used to justify the realization of the lie. Many Israelis who are involved in this military operation or who are seen torturing people in the West Bank, workers in the West Bank on camera, are reenacting the lurid propaganda that they believe to be true about October 7, and it could lead to a regional war. Because the genocidal fury has overwhelmed Israeli society, the propaganda, the shock and awe campaign, has prevented Brussels and Washington from being able to put any check on it.

Chris Hedges: What do you think this means for the hostages that are in Gaza?

Max Blumenthal: That's a great question, and one of the hostages answered it. I don't know her name. She appears to be from one of the kibbutzim that had the most captives taken, it's called near Nir Oz, and that's where two of the elderly captives were released came from. It's a kibbutz that has many people, more from the left of the Israeli political spectrum, who would be critics of Netanyahu, come from. So he may not be – Netanyahu, his government, and the Israeli population – Very favorably disposed to them. But one of these hostages, an older woman, appeared on camera from wherever she was being held inside Gaza and excoriated Netanyahu, and said, you have no desire to get us. What are you doing? Have a ceasefire, negotiate for our release, and get us out of here. You've already killed 50 of us. And that is correct. At least 50 captives have already been killed in these blitzkrieg-like Israeli bombings where they're using 2,000-pound bombs and Mark 82 bunker-buster bombs.

So I don't think they'll make it out alive. It would be a miracle if they made it out alive. Everyone wants them to make it out alive, whether they're on the anti-Zionist side, or … Well, I shouldn't say everyone wants to make it out alive. It appears that those who want them to make it out are those who are protesting Netanyahu outside his office and outside the military headquarters who tend to be leftists or anti-Zionists in Israel. And those who could care less about them getting out are Netanyahu's supporters the military supporters and the military commanders themselves. Because what about this operation suggests that they're actually trying to rescue hostages? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. And the political dynamics that have been put in play by assaulting everyone in the Gaza Strip, are sending the message that no negotiations are possible whatsoever.

Netanyahu could fall at any day as this operation goes on if certain things take place. For example, if the soldiers that the Israeli military has sent into the few unpopulated areas in Northern Gaza where they've set up these defacto bases of Merkava tanks, if they actually get out of their tanks and wade into the rubble or try to actually take out tunnels themselves, they're going to lose many, many lives, and Netanyahu will likely fall, but he would also fall if he negotiated for the release of these captives. Why? Because of the propaganda that he put into play, the propaganda was so extreme and so lurid, and they went so far beyond an already horrific reality on October 7 that the Israeli public was whipped into such a fervor that they would not stand for any negotiation with Hamas. So the only objective that can be put forward, which has been reinforced by Tony Blinken, is regime change in Gaza. And regime change in Gaza means months and months of grinding, genocidal war in which no captive could possibly survive.

Chris Hedges: Isn't it straightforward? They took the captives because they wanted a prisoner exchange. Netanyahu could empty the Israeli prisons of four or five, six, I don't know, 10,000 Palestinian prisoners, and they would get there. The hostages would go home, wouldn't they?

Max Blumenthal: Yeah. This isn't about Hamas per se. Hamas does have the political mandate to carry out an armed struggle. That's why it was elected in 2006, including by people who are not necessarily Islamists outside of its base. They actually won cities across the West Bank. It wasn't that they won Gaza, they won all of Palestine that was able to vote. So their mandate is to do armed struggle to resist where the Fatah and the Palestinian authority basically gave up, and they're going to continue doing that. But Palestinian armed struggle has always been driven by political demands that were essentially rational and were related to ending ethnic cleansing and ending the military occupation of Palestinians. The leadership of Hamas put forward clear political demands at the beginning of the Al Aqsa Flood as they did in 2014 during Operation Cast Lead. They relate to preventing the incursions of fanatical religious nationalists to the Al Aqsa Compound, the third holiest site in Islam, they relate to ending the siege of Gaza so that they can actually determine they can enjoy some sovereignty. They can actually fish in their own seas. They can have an economy, they can visit Jerusalem.

Emptying the Israeli prisons, where something like 1,500 Palestinians are now held without charges, 700 Palestinian children pass in and out of these prisons every year. There are currently at least 150, now there are probably 200 Palestinian children being held in these jails. They're hostages. They've been kidnapped. I've gone to their trials in the Israeli children's courts and they were kidnapped in their own beds. Ahad Tamimi was kidnapped. I've known her since she was a child and her village, Nabi Salih has been waging this unarmed struggle against the Israeli occupation in the West Bank. Her dad was kidnapped, Basam, who's really the leader of that struggle and is an international hero.

And so it relates to the whole occupation. And the only way that they could trigger some negotiation, they believe, was by taking captives, because all diplomatic channels had been cut off. The entire West had declared Hamas a terrorist organization that could not be negotiated with. So the only way to spur negotiations is through violence. And that's what they did. And what they've done is forced the essential dynamics of Zionism into an accelerated mode. Because Zionism, as a settler colonial movement based on an anachronistic ideology, Heron Volk ideology

from the turn of the century Europe, has demonstrated its unwillingness to accommodate the native population as it seeks to consolidate its settler-colonial presence. And so it must move towards genocide as all other settler-colonial movements have done. And so that's where we're at right now, is the phase of whether Israel will be able to finish the job that it began in 1948 or not.

And any negotiations that could have taken place with a rational authority are off limits. This is also an obvious failure of American and Western leadership to recognize not only what they're dealing with in the Gaza Strip, which is yet another Palestinian faction that is using violence to spur political momentum because all diplomatic means had been cut off for them, but also what they're dealing with in Israel. Where they're dealing with a fundamentally genocidal political movement and a genocidal society. This Israeli society is primed for genocide. You can look at the viral videos. The videos that are going viral in Israeli social media are parents actually enlisting their own children as props to mock Palestinian children who are dying, dressing them up in hijab to mock Palestinian girls who are dying, who are being starved, who are thirsty because the water has been cut off.

There's a new trend started by an Israeli journalist from Channel 13 in Israel of mocking Palestinian prisoners in the West Bank who are detained for eight hours and forced to listen to a children's song endlessly to torment them, and they dance around mocking the video of the prisoners. The singer of that children's song was brought to perform in an Israeli military base. You can look at the footage of all the pop singers appearing at military bases or in the so-called Gaza Envelope, where reservists are preparing to go into Gaza, and it's straightforward genocidal anthems about re-conquering Gaza, driving out its inhabitants, and reestablishing Israeli settlements that are even bigger than the former settlement of Gush Katif. The Israeli Ministry of Intelligence has even introduced a think tank's paper, which calls for the full ethnic cleansing of Gaza and the forced transfer of its residents to Egypt. They put it forward as an official blueprint for the aftermath of this operation that they call Iron Swords.

So that's what the US has green-lit here. And by trying to spur some basic political momentum and relaxation of the siege – Hamas might've just agreed to a relaxation of the siege to be able to deliver something for their constituents – By trying to do that with violence when all diplomatic channels have been cut off, what they've done is forced this conflict into its final phase. I don't think Israel will stop before it believes that it has finished the job that it began in 1948.

Chris Hedges: Great. That was Max Blumenthal from The Grayzone. You can read his article, “October 7 Testimonies Reveal Israel’s Military Shelling Israeli Citizens With Tanks and Missiles” at The Grayzone. I want to thank The Real News Network and its production team: Cameron Granadino, Adam Coley, David Hebden, and Kayla Rivara. You can find me at chrisedges.substack.com.

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